

## TRACES OF TRACES

*Mapping Traces*, an exhibition organized by María Clara Cortés in connection with the transdisciplinary conference bearing the same name and held at the National University of Colombia in Bogotá in November of 2014, gathers the work of eight artists together with various “thought diagrams” by the lecturers (mathematicians, artists, philosophers) who participated in the event. The meeting and the exhibition's purpose was to build bridges and enable their mutual crossing; bridges between the disciplines, perusing various *traces of transit* among different scaffoldings of knowledge. As one of the results of the dialogues, one might say that art is peculiarly aware of *residues*, inasmuch as the artistic work detects (with extreme negative force) fragments of what escapes us, whereas mathematics observes (with positive depth) the *structures* that encompass those remnants we do decipher. In this way, a natural philosophical dialectics occurs between art and mathematics, strongly dependent on how the local remnant *reflects* (or doesn't) the global structure that holds it.

In the case of the exhibition *Mapping Traces*, the works of the eight artists keenly reveal the edge of the abyss. The struggle between the visible and the invisible is a central motive of all the constructions. The extraordinary work “Re-trato” (2004) by Óscar Muñoz, undoubtedly the crown of the exhibition, shows the draftsman who during 28 dense minutes draws his own profile with water brush strokes on a warm stone, with the author's figure emerging and immediately disappearing, leaving traces of fleeting identity on the stone; the iterated “trying” (the work's title Re-trato means por/trait but suggests “repeated trying” in Spanish), repeated to exhaustion, of the evaporation suggests how we ourselves are not much more than little remnants of an unfathomable fantasmagory. “Urdimbre” (Warp) (2014) by Leyla Cárdenas shows us a column made of a welded metal net rising from a well behaved ellipse at floor level up to a progressive decomposition of the net as it approaches the ceiling. The visible transforms itself into the invisible, as the fragment dissolves from the net and appears hanging, isolated, singular, lost, from a horizontal beam that connects the two concrete

columns that support the exhibition room. The diagonal reflection of the structure appears again in “Horizontal” (2013) by Santiago Reyes, where two thick pencils, graphite bars, opposing one another point to the inevitable contradictions of knowledge. The heliographies “Sin título” (2014) by Bernardo Ortiz wield a calligraphy of *Pleasure* back and front, over a background alternating thick and thin pigmentations, where we lose our orientation and minimal luminic traces end up setting out of phase our intuition of space. Gustavo Zalamea's “Letters” (1986-1989) interweave collage and writing, mixing trees, mountains, waters, plazas, in a sort of intentional cross-pollination of geometric figures and linguistic expressions (daily comfort, artistic projects); the traces of time, particularly visible in the correspondence, represent slight fractures in the continuous unfolding of a complex story that happens above ourselves. Donald Kurka draws with markers over paper a “Quartet for trees” (2014), where remnants of leaves and fragments of birds are placed as notes in a score, combining strange chords between residues of nature and visual and musical imagination of the author. Santiago Cárdenas's “Boceto para un tablero” (Sketch for a Blackboard, 1978) presents a charcoal blackboard, whose depth transcends the linear margins of the board, rises above certain diagonals of perspective on the floor and opens the door to an obscure “beyond” (reminiscent of the late Gödel photographs next to his blackboard) that supersedes any visible trace. Finally, “Juegos de herencia” (Heirloom games, 2011) by Clemencia Echeverri draws directly from tribal roots of violence, in the remnants of dehumanization of our times, exhibiting in a raw and crude way the contradiction between the atavistic ritual of beheading a defenseless cock buried in sand and the routine vision of the game brandished by the participants.

The works in the exhibition *Mapping Traces* enter an original dialogue with the diagrams solicited to the participants by the organizers of the conference *Mapping Traces*, María Clara Cortés (an artist) and Andrés Villaveces (a mathematician). The traces reverberate, reflect and multiply the natural dialectics between the traces of intellect (diagrams of the lectures) and the traces of sensibility (the artworks). A *dream stairway* brings to our memories the ideal utopias of reason, an ascent that engages tension with a *heart* (*co/razón* in Spanish – *co/reason*) whose “reasons the reason does not

know” (Pascal). Various model-theoretic *amalgams* are drawn to the shape of hearts, and convene the *butterflies of ambiguity* in Galois theory. *A map of contemporary logic* contrasts with the fantasmagoric vision of Dante's *circles of Inferno*. Several *pollution processes*, of smoothing out and perspectivity feed a dialogue of *passages* between the visible and the invisible. *Huge towers* of models and *minimal traces* with the fine-point pen seem to revive the two Pascalian infinities. The collection constitutes an unexpected and valuable arsenal, adequately representing the images of thought of both mathematicians and artists. The conference and the exhibition thus materialize a space of *real exchange*, particularly aware of contemporary issues, between art and mathematics, described by Francastel as “the two poles of every logical thinking, the two major modes of thought for humankind”.

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(Translated by Andrés Villaveces<sup>1</sup>)

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